

Letter from Gilbert Grosvenor to Alexander Graham Bell, June 28, 1915

June 28, 1915 Dr. Alexander Graham Bell, Beinn Bhreagh, Baddeck, Nova Scotia Dear Dr. Bell:

Elsie and I are very happy to leave Melville with you and Little Mother for the summer months. We both feel that he will get much more mental and physical development under your care in Baddeck, than he would in the journey West. He is fortunate indeed to have grandparents so wise and inspiring and interested in him.

He has been working very hard ever since he returned from school in early June, learning how to take pictures, to develop them and print them. He has spent hours every day at this work, for he is ambitious to be the photographer of your laboratory the coming summer. I hope you will give him a good trial, as he really has shown considerable skill in his work here. We have been so busy studying focus, light, developing, printing, etc., that I have not had an opportunity to explain to him the physical and chemical changes that take place. A great deal of physics and chemistry could be taught in this connection, which I think he would eagerly absorb. How the lens acts on the light rays, what changes take place in the film, I have not had time to explain to him, and will appreciate it if you can tell him about the spectrum, etc.

Elsie and I have been much pleased with the initiative and originality which he has been showing in his study of photography. For instance, he wished to take a picture of himself, so he got a mirror, which he placed three feet, away from himself, as he held the camera. HE FOCUSED THE CAMERA AT SIX FEET. His mother, watching him, recommended that he should focus the camera at three feet because the mirror was three feet away. I should probably have given the same recommendation if I had been present. But he was

Library of Congress

very insistent that the proper focus was six feet, because, as he said, the light rays had to travel from himself to the mirror and back again. The picture proved that he was right.

As you know, I have taken thousands and thousands of photographs, and have had good luck occasionally. I am a great believer in taking many photographs, because it inevitably happens that many of them will turn out badly. Of course, the films are expensive, but one photographs to get a good picture, and it is more satisfactory and cheaper in the end to sacrifice three or four if thereby one good photograph is secured. So I have been encouraging Melville to take a lot of photographs, as experience is the best teacher.

2

I have provided him with an efficient kodak and enough photographic film, photographic paper and chemicals for his needs for two weeks. I have told him that he has enough to show you what he can do, and I hope that he will make good and secure the position of photographer of your laboratory.

I am hoping that, as last year, he will read often with you, as I am very anxious that he should acquire some of your gifts of expression and elocution.

He has matured very rapidly in the last twelve months, and I think might now be ready to tackle the Melville Bell symbols, which would help him very much.

I have told him to be sure and have two copper or galvanized iron tanks placed in his dingy, and I shall be very grateful to you if you will make sure that he does this. I have also told him that he is not to sail outside the line from the warehouse to the Webber's unless he is sailing with another boat which is competently handled . He tells me that last year he sailed a great deal in one dingy and Miss Schmidt in another, and went out in the big lake. I really do not think that this is safe, because Miss Schmidt is inexperienced. I would have no objection to his sailing out into the big lake, provided Kathleen or Casey were in another dingy or a motor boat in the vicinity.

Library of Congress

Last year Melville was very cautious and I was sure he would take no risks, but he is now at the age where a boy is apt to think he knows everything about sailing and has a contempt for the dangers of wind and water.

Very sincerely yours, Gilbert Grosvenor.

June , 1915 Dr. Alexander Graham Bell, Beinn Bhreagh, Baddeck, Nova Scotia Dear Dr. Bell:

Elsie and I are very happy to leave Melville with you and little Mother for the summer months. We both feel that he will get much more mental and physical development under your care in Baddeck than he would in the journey West. He is fortunate indeed to have grandparents so wise and inspiring and interested in him. # He has been working very hard ever since he returned from school in early June, learning how to take pictures, to develop them and print them. He has spent hours every day at this work for he is ambitious to be the photographer of the your laboratory the coming summer. and I hope you will give him a good trial. As he really has shown considerable skill in his work here. We have been so busy studying focus, light, developing, printing, etc., that I have not had an opportunity to explain to him the physical and chemical changes that take place. A great deal of physics and chemistry could be taught in this connection, which I think he would eagerly absorb. How the bus acts on the light rays, what changes take place in the film, I have not had time to explain to him and will appreciate it if you can tell him about the spectrums, etc.

I am hoping that, as last year, he will read often with you, as I am very anxious that he should acquire some of your gifts of expression and elocution.

He has matured very rapidly in the last twelve months, and I think might now be ready to tackle the Melville Bell symbols, which would help him very much.

Library of Congress

I have told him to be sure and have two copper or galvanized iron tanks placed in his dingy, and I shall be very grateful to you if you will make sure that he does this. I have also told him that he is not to sail outside the line from the warehouse to the Webber's unless he is sailing with another boat which is competently handled. He tells me that last year he sailed a great deal in one dingy and Miss Schmidt in another, and went out in the big lake. I really do not think that this is safe, because Miss Schmidt is inexperienced. I would have no objection to his sailing out into the big lake provided Kathleen or Casey were in another dingy or a motor boat in the vicinity .

Last year Melville was very cautious and I was sure he would take no risks, but he is now at the age where a boy is apt to think he knows everything about sailing and has a contempt for the dangers o n the water f wind and water,